



THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERSITY

Director, Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Full-Time, Ongoing

DUTIES:

About the Position

The Director, Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition (PLAR) is a key position providing visionary leadership for the academic application of PLAR within Thompson Rivers University (TRU), as well as within the province of British Columbia through the promotion of the Open Learning Educational "Credit Bank" as mandated by the Thompson Rivers University Act (2005). The Director is an active, critical, and vocal champion of PLAR within Open Learning's leadership team, helping to ensure that PLAR activities are carried out in a collegial, rigorous, consistent, and transparent manner based on evidence through relevant academic research. This position is responsible for the advocacy of PLAR both within the institution and to outside domestic and international stakeholder groups, as well as the successful and stable management of PLAR related activities. As a knowledgeable champion of best practices and the academic role of PLAR, the Director influences and shapes institutional policy and is responsible for setting departmental goals that are aligned with TRU's strategic priorities. The Director also provides leadership by overseeing key projects and initiatives that advance the objectives of the department and guiding a group of dedicated staff and consultants who assist learners in the development of Knowledge Resumes and assess the demonstrated learning of PLAR applicants.

About Open Learning

As a division, Open Learning (OL) is the primary expression of TRU's commitment to open access as identified in the Act. Celebrating forty years of excellence in distance and open education, OL has played a critical role for learners unable to access formal post-secondary education through individual circumstance or opportunity. Hallmarks of OL's approach to open access include one of the most progressive residency requirements in Canada that allows for the significant acceptance of formal, informal and non-formal learning; and a curriculum development and delivery model that allows learners access to quality post-secondary education at a time and place that meets their needs. Today, OL has approximately 240 OLFMS, supports over 500 courses, and has over 23,000 enrolments each year from students across Canada.

About the PLAR Department

The size of the PLAR Department belies its importance and impact within and for Open Learning specifically, and TRU generally. The Director's position currently has two direct reports, the PLAR Advisors, who guide students through the PLAR process from initial inquiries through to portfolio development, challenge exams, and Credit Bank. There is also a team of nine PLAR Competency-based Portfolio assessors and a group of faculty subject matter experts who assess Course-based Portfolio content. The department also works with Faculties and Schools as well as the Registrar's Office and external partners. The PLAR Department has touched the lives of hundreds of students who have been able to advance their education in a manner that not only saves money and time, but also demonstrates respect to individuals by recognizing their formal, informal and non-formal learning.

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Advocacy

The Director will champion the practice of PLAR by:

- Directing the development and implementation of PLAR systems and processes for TRU's Faculties, Schools and Open Learning Division;

- Informing institutional policy with respect to PLAR mandates, strategic plans, and initiatives;
- Developing and implementing long range strategic plans, goals, and performance monitoring for PLAR at TRU;
- Representing TRU externally at provincial, national and international meetings and policy discussions relevant to PLAR and the objectives of the department;
- Directing development of marketing materials (website, brochures, promotional items) concerning the Open Learning Educational Credit Bank, the PLAR Department, and the Prior Learning International Research Centre;
- Developing and planning information sharing and capacity building activities including, but not limited to, seminars, conferences, workshops, short courses, and other programs and projects related to PLAR, e.g., the Credit Bank, at TRU; and
- Serving on various committees as required, e.g., the Senate International Affairs Committee.

Leadership

The Director will provide visionary leadership by:

- Being a tireless advocate and educator of the department and practice of PLAR within the TRU community;
- Providing collegial consultation to key stakeholders within and outside TRU;
- Examining, guiding, and supporting current practices in academic units at TRU in order to develop new systems in PLAR and recommending best practices to Deans, Department Chairs, and faculty members;
- Working closely with academic units/departments that have existing or planned PLAR initiatives to enhance efforts by providing suggestions that lead to improved operational systems, to coordinate efforts that already exist across academic units/departments, and share ideas regarding successful initiatives across TRU;
- Creating, developing, and leading teams of assessors who conduct PLAR evaluations; and
- Maintaining quality assurance throughout the PLAR process(es).

Research and Knowledge Dissemination

The Director will support and implement evidence-based research related to TRU's PLAR practice by:

- Directing the activities of an internationally recognized research agenda, including administering the Prior Learning International Research Centre, preparing grant proposals, publications, and presentations;
- Researching and maintaining a working knowledge of best practices at peer institutions regarding operation of PLAR, including the Credit Bank; and
- Preparing and delivering PLAR presentations to diverse audiences.

Management

The Director will provide stable and supportive management by:

- Recruiting, interviewing, supervising and collaborating with PLAR Advising staff as well as managing Professional Service Contracts for external PLAR assessors;
- Working with Open Learning's Budget Officer in preparing and recommending the budget for the Department of PLAR;
- Preparing budget-related grant proposals, as well as monitoring, verifying and reconciling expenditure of budgeted funds as appropriate; and
- Mediating and resolving conflict as needed.

REPORTS TO

Associate Vice-President, Open Learning

REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS

- An earned Ph.D./Ed.D. preferred, ideally in higher education or adult learning. Equivalencies will be considered.
- A respected academic with a successful research record, including demonstrated ability to obtain external funding.
- Familiarity with domestic and international trends in PLAR research and practices.
- Significant instructional experience in a post-secondary environment.
- Significant experience in educational administration in a post-secondary environment, including familiarity with common registrarial practices as they relate to PLAR.
- Demonstrated ability to create/articulate a strong vision by working effectively with a diverse range of people including senior administration, students, faculty, staff and Board of Governments, as well as external contacts including government agencies and Industry.
- Demonstrated ability to plan, organize and successfully manage research projects.
- Other key skills/attributes include the ability to:
 - Resolve conflict and build teams with diplomacy
 - Communicate effectively including formal presentations
 - Assess/research/present an evidence-based argument
 - Develop and use metrics
 - Plan and manage budgets
 - Work in an ambiguous or “grey” environment

COMMENCEMENT OF EMPLOYMENT: February 1, 2019

REVIEW DATE FOR APPLICATIONS: Applications will be reviewed commencing December 11, 2018, and may continue until position is filled.

Please apply here: <https://tru.hua.hrsmart.com/hr/ats/Posting/view/13288>